

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 303471
ORIGIN SS-25

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

S E C R E T STATE 303471

EXDIS, CAIRO FOR USDEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EG, IS, SY, PGOV

SUBJECT: BRIEFING FOR SARG ON CAIRO CONFERENCE

1. PURSUANT TO SECRETARY'S OFFER TO KEEP SYRIANS INFORMED OF PROCEEDINGS OF CAIRO CONFERENCE, FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY RUNDOWN ON INITIAL CAIRO MEETINGS THAT YOU MAY USE WITH KHADDAM IF YOU ARE ASKED. HOWEVER, GIVEN KHADDAM'S ATTITUDE, WE DO NOT THINK YOU SHOULD VOLUNTEER A BRIEFING.
2. CAIRO TALKS CONVENED FORMALLY DECEMBER 14, BUT THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN A NUMBER OF INFORMAL CONTACTS BETWEEN DELEGATIONS. IN OPENING STATEMENTS PARTIES EXPRESSED DETERMINATION TO WORK FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND REGRETTED ABSENCE OF THOSE PARTIES WHICH WERE INVITED BUT DID NOT ATTEND.

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2. PROBLEM OF CHAIRMANSHIP, WHICH PRIOR TO THE MEETING SEEMED TO BE SHAPING UP AS A MAJOR ONE, WAS QUICKLY RESOLVED BY AGREEMENT THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CHAIRMAN IN FORMAL SENSE. EGYPTIANS THEN PROPOSED PREPARATION OF AGENDA AND DISCUSSION OF BASIC PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. TOPICS FOR AGENDA ARE CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED.

3. SO FAR THE PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN A BLEND OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL MEETINGS, PATTERN WHICH IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE. BOTH SIDES, AND EGYPTIANS IN PARTICULAR, SEE FORMAL SESSIONS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN IN DEPTH CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL POINTS OF THEIR POLICY. EGYPTIANS HAVE TAKEN PAINS TO DO THIS PARTICULARLY ON THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION. ATMOSPHERE HAS BEEN REMARKABLY GOOD, WITH BOTH EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI DELEGATES ATTEMPTING TO STEER THE DISCUSSION IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION.

4. WE HAVE TOLD BOTH SIDES THAT WE SEE OUR OWN ROLE AT CAIRO AS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF LISTENING AND BEING AVAILABLE TO OFFER SUGGESTIONS OR ADVICE IF AND WHEN PARTIES TURN TO US.

5. ALL IN ALL, DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES SEPARATING EGYPT AND ISRAEL, IT HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE TO SEE THEM TALKING DIRECTLY TO ONE ANOTHER, AND EACH LISTENING TO WHAT THE OTHER HAS TO SAY.

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